

Memory Strategies

Helping you remember

This handout explains the 4 types of memory. It also gives strategies to help you remember things if your memory is impaired.

What is memory?

Memory is the ability to learn, store, and retrieve information. New or increasing problems with any or all of these 3 stages of memory often occur after a traumatic brain injury, stroke, brain tumor, multiple sclerosis, or other kind of injury or illness that affects your nervous system.



Injury or illness can affect your memory.

Some memory problems may also occur as part of normal aging, when many people have more trouble retrieving new information.

Types of Memory

- **Long-term (remote):** memory for old, well-learned information that has been *rehearsed* (used) over time, such as the name of a childhood pet, memories of vacations, or where you went to high school. Long-term memory tends to remain after injury or illness.
- **Short-term (recent):** memory for new things that took place a few minutes, hours, or days ago, such as what you had for breakfast or what you did yesterday. Short-term memory tends to be the most affected after injury. People who have had brain injuries may have problems with attention span, storing memories, thinking quickly, and learning easily. These memory problems make it hard to understand and save short-term memories so that they can be rehearsed and stored in long-term memory.
- **Immediate (working):** memory for information that is current, that you usually keep track of mentally, such as a phone number you look up, directions someone just gave you, or keeping track of numbers in your head when you add or subtract.
- **Prospective:** the ability to remember to do something in the future, such as taking a medicine, going to an appointment, or following through on an assignment or project.



A medicine organizing tool can help you remember when to take your medicines.

Strategies to Help Improve Your Memory

Your speech therapist can help you with strategies to help you remember new information. There are 2 main types of strategies to help your memory: internal reminders and external reminders.

Internal Reminders

- **Rehearsal:** retelling yourself information you just learned, or restating it out loud in your own words.
- **Repetition:** saying the same information over and over, either silently or out loud.
- **Clarification:** asking others to repeat or rephrase information.
- **Chunking:** grouping items to reduce the number of items to remember, such as grouping 7-digit phone numbers into 2 chunks, one with 3 numbers and the other with 4 numbers.
- **Rhyming:** making a rhyme out of important information.
- **Acronyms or alphabet cueing:** creating a letter for each word you want to remember, or vice versa. One example is using the sentence “**E**very **G**ood **B**oy **D**oes **F**ine” to remember that the notes E, G, B, D, and F are on the lines of a treble staff in music.
- **Imagery (also called visualization):** creating pictures of the information in your mind.
- **Association:** linking old information or habits with the new, such as taking your medicine at the same time that you brush your teeth.
- **Personal meaning:** making the new information meaningful or emotionally important to you in some way.

External Reminders

- Using a paper or electronic calendar or day planner.
- Setting timers or alarms to remind you to do something.
- Using written reminders such as to-do lists, shopping lists, and project outlines.
- Recording new information with a voice recorder.
- Using a medicine organizing tool, such as a MediSet.
- Creating specific, permanent places for important items. One example is putting your keys, wallet, and cell phone in the same place every time you get home.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

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